One Fits All? Explaining Support for Immigration Control in a Group Comparative Perspective

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ONE FITS ALL? EXPLAINING SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRATION CONTROL IN A GROUP COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

By using data from a factorial survey we analyze the role of economic and cultural threat in explaining support for immigration control in Switzerland. Threat is modeled more directly than in many previous studies: Economic threat is assumed to be high when migrants and natives have similar levels of education, and perceived cultural threat is assumed to be high when nationally pride natives are confronted with migrants unwilling to adapt culturally. Furthermore, it is analyzed whether threat varies across immigrant groups that differ in size, aggregate skill level and cultural background. Results show that both economic and cultural threat play a role in explaining support for immigration control. In line with previous studies economic threat seems to be an issue for highly-skilled natives when they are confronted with large groups of migrants with similar skill levels to their own. Likewise, nationally pride natives seem threatened not only by culturally distant migrants, but also by large migrant groups who are not willing to adapt culturally while not being dissimilar enough to stay culturally apart. Further studies are necessary to examine whether these patterns generalize to other countries and immigration groups.

1. Opposition to skilled migrants from Western Europe: An empirical puzzle

In February 2014, a tight majority of 50.3% of Swiss voters supported the so-called "mass immigration initiative". The referendum was initiated by the SVP (Schweizerische Volkspartei), a populist right wing party, and aimed at limiting immigration after a period of unrestricted mobility between Switzerland and many EU countries.

Well known theoretical approaches to explaining immigration sceptical attitudes were challenged by the majority of Swiss voters. These approaches often focus on *economic threat* – not the first thing to come to mind in a prosperous country like Switzerland with employment levels approaching full employment and inflows dominated by the much sought-after highly-skilled migrants (Faist, 2013: 1642). The same holds true for the most prominent alternative explanation, i.e. *cultural threat*, namely the idea that natives want to defend what they consider as their national culture against influences from other cultures. After all, most migrants to Switzerland come from Western European countries and should not be perceived by natives as that different in terms of their cultural, religious or linguistic background.

Reference to the high share of foreign residents – about 23% of the population and thus higher than in almost any other European country – does not seem to offer an easy explanation either. According to the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), a large number of migrants lead to more contact opportunities and often to more personal contacts between majority and minority members. Such contacts should improve intergroup attitudes according to empirical studies (Wagner et al., 2003). Other authors have argued that large and increasing numbers of immigrants increase hostility and prejudice (Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky 2006). In any case, no clear relationship between the share of foreigners and immigration-sceptical attitudes in Switzerland can be detected. For example, among the cantons where a majority of voters supported the initiative there is only one canton with a relatively high share of foreigners (Ticino).[1]

In this article, we will try to explain immigration-sceptical attitudes and thus focus on an issue that has received considerably less attention than racial prejudice or xenophobia (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010: 313). We do so by analyzing data from an online survey that was conducted soon after the mass immigration referendum. About 1,100 respondents with Swiss citizenship were asked for their subjective evaluations with regard to the need of limiting immigration – with an origin group-specific focus. We used a factorial survey design that combines advantages of experimental studies with the high external validity of general population surveys. Respondents were confronted with experimentally varying stimuli (vignettes) that refer systematically to aspects of economic and cultural threats. This design allows to clearly disentangle dimensions related to different forms of threat and to separate their effects from the ethnic origin of immigrants. Doing so enables us to contribute to explaining anti-immigration attitudes in Switzerland and to advance knowledge on the scope of the different theoretical explanations.

2. Theoretical background: The role of economic and cultural threat in explaining anti-immigration attitudes

Research on natives' attitudes on immigrants and immigration has long focused on individual-level correlates in single national contexts. Numerous studies based on survey data demonstrate the crucial role of individual characteristics such as contacts to minority members (see Wagner et al., 2003; Weins, 2011), education (Hello, Scheepers and Gijsberts, 2002), national identity, national pride and political orientation (Hjerm, 1998; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon, 2005), and socialization (Adorno et al., 1950). More recent studies try to overcome the narrow focus on individualistic motivation of xenophobia by focusing on the *interaction* between natives' and migrants' as well as contextual characteristics (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010: 323). This strategy is promising because not all individuals react similar to changes on the context-level. Many of these studies refer to the work of Herbert Blumer

(1958) and emphasize the role of group-threat, i.e. challenges to perceived group-privileges, in explaining natives' dislike of migrants – and variation herein (Quillian, 1995). These privileges can be economic or cultural in nature.

Depending on their individual characteristics, natives may feel that large inflows of migrants increase competition for scarce resources such as jobs or income (ibid.), especially in times of economic crisis. In order to measure economic threat empirically it is important to capture the *specific* constellations in which feelings of threat arise among some subgroups of natives. This, in turn, requires data that allow to identify "'a most likely case', one where economic threat is expected to be present" (Malhotra, Margalit and Mo, 2013: 392). The authors argue that "[…] past research may have failed to find evidence of economic factors underlying anti-immigration sentiment not because labor-market threat has no effect on people's preferences, but because for a large share of Americans, immigrants do not pose such a threat" (ibid.: 405). According to the "labor market competition hypothesis" (Schewe and Slaughter, 2001), one important precondition for the emergence of perceived or real migration-related economic threat is that subgroups of natives experience large scale immigration from migrants with *similar* skill levels.[2]

Group privileges that majority members may want to defend are not limited to economic ones. Newcomers can also be perceived as a threat to national identity and culture. Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior argue that cultural or identity threat can be expected to be a "function of perceptual distinctiveness, salience, and entativity", the latter referring "to the perceived internal cohesiveness of a group" (2004: 36; see also Zárate et al., 2003). Anti-immigration attitudes can thus be expected to be strong when allegedly culturally dissimilar (distinctiveness) groups immigrate, when there is a lot of debate about them (salience), and when the groups are perceived as forming segregated "communities" (entativity). Of course, it is even more demanding to capture cultural threat "objectively" than economic threat. Who is perceived a threat to group identity may vary across groups and contexts, and this may not

depend on something like belonging to a different denomination. This argument was convincingly made by Helbling who refers to an argument by Theiler and claims that "[s]mall cultural differences […] are typically fragile and often result, according to Theiler's argument […] in 'subconscious fears of insufficient separation from and damaging exposure to the other category'" (Helbling, 2011: 15). In brief: Cultural threat can arise from cultural difference as well as from cultural similarity of immigrants.

3. Capturing economic and cultural threat empirically: Existing findings

Empirical support for the role of economic threat in explaining anti-immigration attitudes depends on how the latter is measured. With respect to individual characteristics there is ample empirical evidence that "less-skilled (more skilled) people prefer more-restrictionist (less-restrictionist) immigration policy" (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001: 144) and that this relationship is particularly strong in high per capita GDP countries (Mayda, 2004). It has been hypothesized that less-educated natives worry more about competition from less-educated migrants that dominate inflows in many receiving countries. However, highly educated natives do not seem to oppose highly educated migrants as one would expect on the basis of a narrow understanding of an economic competition model (O'Connell, 2011). Helbling and Kriesi, for example, use vignettes in order to study how migrants' skill level affects attitudes of highly- and less-skilled natives and find that both groups favor highly-skilled migration (2014).[3] A simple explanation at hand for this phenomenon is that they are better protected against lay-offs.

However, the interplay between respondents' and migrants' characteristics is rarely studied systematically across different immigrant groups and immigration contexts. While Helbling's and Kriesi's study contains explicit information on the ethnic origin of the according migrant (that is kept constant by asking about Serbian migrants with varying skill levels), other studies leave it open. Given that many studies are conducted in countries with an

overwhelmingly low- or medium-skilled immigration, most respondents in surveys on migration-related attitudes can be expected to associate less-skilled migrants (for the U.S. see Schewe and Slaughter, 2001: 135). The general finding that both highly-skilled natives and less-skilled natives prefer highly-skilled migrants may thus just reflect the fact that highly-skilled natives are seldom confronted with many immigrants with similar skill levels than their own.

In fact, the few studies that have focused on a context with many highly-skilled migrants or have asked explicitly about origin groups with high aggregate skill levels suggest that perceived or real competition is an issue for highly-skilled natives as well (see Malhotra, Margalit and Mo, 2013). The study by Helbling (2011) reveals that in Switzerland, a country with many highly-skilled migrants, the well-known pattern that highly-skilled natives are more positive towards migrants than less-skilled natives disappears when attitudes to Germans – a large and highly-skilled group – are analyzed (ibid.: 19). Likewise, Facchini and Mayda (2012) show that "the higher the education level attained by the respondent, the lower is the probability that he favours good educational qualifications of immigrants" (ibid.: 191). In sum, these results suggest that an explanation emphasizing the role of perceived economic competition deserves closer scrutiny, ideally by taking a migrant groups' overall size and skill level into account more systematically.

Turning to the explanatory power of cultural or identity threat some authors argue that it is more important than economic threat (Manevska and Achterberg, 2011; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004). On the individual level, a preference for cultural unity, national pride and similar indicators are used to identify cultural threat (Hjerm, 1998; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon, 2005; Sides and Citrin, 2007; see also Chandler and Tsai, 2001; Pehrson, Gheorghiu and Ireland, 2011). Cross-national studies based on survey data mostly measure cross-national differences in cultural threat by looking at the share of migrants from non-EU countries (Manevska and Achterberg, 2011). Studies that analyze the

interaction between individual and group level characteristics, most importantly a group's cultural background, are rare. An exception is again the study by Helbling who shows that respondents who think that Swiss culture is in danger have generally more hostile attitudes towards both German and Serbian migrants but that this effect is much stronger for the latter group (2011: 19).

It is important to note that many studies find support for both lines of argument – i.e. for the relevance of economic and cultural threat – that are, for sure, not mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, indicators for both types of threat (economic and cultural) are often correlated (see Manevska and Achterberg, 2011: 439). In Western Europe, for example, the vivid debate about Muslim migrants centers on a group that is both predominantly less-skilled and perceived as culturally distant due to its religious background. In order to tackle this problem, some more recent studies do not rely solely on survey data but on a combination of survey and experimental data. Good examples are the studies by Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) and by Helbling (2011). Likewise, Sniderman, Haagendoorn and Prior conducted a "fitting in" experiment and asked subgroups of respondents what they think about migrants who fit in either culturally or economically. Their study supports the view that cultural threat is more important than economic threat (2004: 43).

On the context level, the size of the immigrant population and of immigration inflows is an often studied determinant of migration attitudes. After all, both economic and cultural threat are expected to increase with the size of the immigrant population. In fact, several studies support the view that large and/or increasing numbers of migrants intensify anti-foreigner sentiment (Meuleman, Davidov and Billiet, 2009; Quillian, 1995; Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky, 2006). Applied to single national contexts, this implies that not only a groups' aggregate skill level and cultural background but also the size of different groups need to be taken into account in order to assess group specific economic and cultural threat.

This brief review of the literature shows that recent studies on immigration sceptical attitudes try to move beyond previous research by studying the role of economic and cultural threat more directly. Following the general approach of these studies we will now turn to analyzing the role of economic and cultural threat in specific constellations of respondent and migrant characteristics in the Swiss context: Do these theoretical assumptions also generalize to the Swiss context with its comparatively skilled immigrant population? Another contribution to the literature is that we use a higher number of experimentally varied constellations, which allows testing in greater detail which specific constellations define "threats" to groups of natives and how this interplays with the skill level, cultural background and size of immigrant groups in the country.

4. Data and methods: A factorial survey on immigration sceptical attitudes in Switzerland

We have argued in the introduction that immigration sceptical attitudes in Switzerland are not easy to explain since the country does not seem to be a particularly fertile ground for a strong political statement against immigration. Economic threat is not the first thing to come to mind in the Swiss context. The country is doing economically well and due to low levels of unemployment and relatively high salaries, the share of economically vulnerable natives can be expected to be lower than elsewhere. In addition, 128,000 of the 167,000 foreigners who immigrated to Switzerland in 2013 were Europeans, 103,000 from EU-17 countries. Many of them belong to the internationally much sought-after group of highly-skilled migrants (Faist, 2013).[4] In 2013, Germans were by far the largest immigrant group with 26,400 individuals moving to the country, followed by migrants from Portugal, Italy and France. According to the Swiss statistical office, about 55% of Germans living in Switzerland have tertiary education (from France: about 58%, from Italy: about 20%, data provided by the *Bundesamt fuer Statistik* 2013, available upon request). Likewise, the "classical" concept of cultural

threat seems more suitable for assessing negative attitudes towards migration from outside the EU. In fact, previous studies have shown that non-Western migrants are less popular in Switzerland than Westerners (Helbling, 2011), and German migrants in particular do not seem to experience discrimination in everyday situations (Diekmann, Jann and Näf, 2014).

However, in line with the theoretical arguments above we argue that an explanation that emphasizes the role of economic and cultural threat should not be dismissed too early when it comes to explaining the Swiss puzzle that "discrimination can also be observed towards highly educated and qualified West-Europeans who come to Switzerland in search of employment" (Freitag, Vatter and Mueller, 2015: 2; for first empirical evidence on the relevance of economic and cultural threat in the Swiss context see Ackermann and Freitag, 2015). While most studies reveal that highly-skilled natives are less worried – for good reasons – about migration-related competition, some suggest that high levels of highly-skilled migrants may evoke fear on behalf of natives that their salaries may drop or that their upward mobility is blocked (see Helbling, 2011: 19). With respect to cultural threat, another argument by Helbling, namely that cultural threat can also stem from similar groups because they may be perceived as diluting the own culture, deserves closer attention. Accordingly, more direct measurements of economic and cultural threat need to be used in order to capture this concept properly.

These measurements need to take into account that perceived or real threat evolves in specific constellations of natives' predispositions and migrants' characteristics and may vary across groups that differ with respect to skill level, cultural background and size. To capture these constellations with usual survey questions is a complex and cumbersome enterprise. In order to tackle these problems, we employed a factorial survey design asking respondents to evaluate short descriptions ("vignettes") that are composed of several different characteristics ("dimensions"). The detailed descriptions of – in our case – types of immigrants allow more subtle and less abstract questions than standard item questions on immigration attitudes.

Furthermore, within factorial surveys, the experimental variation and high standardization of stimuli allows to clearly separate indications of economic and cultural threat and possible variation across origin groups. Furthermore, the simultaneous variation of many dimensions reduces socially desirable response behavior (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015).

We implemented our survey experiment into an incentivized online access panel from a Swiss market research firm (http://www.intervista.ch/de)[5] soon after the referendum – fieldwork lasted from March 26 to May 4 in 2014. The online access panel contains over 50,000 participants, living in French and German speaking regions of Switzerland. Panelists were invited to participate in our survey until a sufficient number of respondents was reached; the market research firm sent out one reminder. After successfully recruiting 1,432 individuals, among them 1,139 with Swiss citizenship, the survey was closed. Checks of the marginal distributions of socio-demographic variables reveal the typical overrepresentation of more highly educated respondents in surveys and web surveys in particular (details of the marginal distributions are available on request). Note, however, that factorial surveys like all experimental designs do not require a random respondent sample for causal conclusions. What is crucial is a randomized allocation of stimuli (vignettes) to participants which we successfully implemented (see more information below). The questionnaire was available in German and in French.

The questionnaire asked for respondents' participation and vote in the referendum and basic individual characteristics, among others citizenship, education, and national pride. The vignette module contained four vignettes, i.e. descriptions of groups of immigrants that varied with respect to the following six dimensions: education (regular school degree only versus university degree), intentions to stay permanently versus temporarily, the information whether the immigrants look for a job vacancy that can be filled with a native Swiss (yes or no), language skills (speaking German and/or French: yes or no), migrants' willingness to adapt culturally (yes versus no) and their nationality. Nationalities included German and French (on

average highly-skilled and large immigrant groups in Switzerland), Italian (on average medium-skilled and large group), Norwegian (highly-skilled but extremely small group), Romanian and Croatian (Romanians being much more skilled than Croatians, but in the focus of the debate on poor migration from Eastern Europe[6]).

Note that this design includes a higher number of experimentally varied dimensions than prior studies using an experimental survey design, which varied at maximum four dimensions (see, e.g. Helbling and Kriesi, 2014). A higher amount of information in the vignettes avoids that evaluations will be based on characteristics of the different (ethnic) groups of immigrants that are not explicitly specified in the vignettes. We draw a *D*-efficient sample of vignettes (i.e. dimensions in the sample are uncorrelated; details available on request) with one peculiarity: For about one third of our respondents, we left out information on immigrants' willingness to adapt culturally. This "no information" condition was used to be additionally able to research respondents' prejudices regarding this dimension.

For each type of migrant (see Figure 1 for a sample vignette), the respondent had to rate on a seven point scale if he or she thinks that immigration to Switzerland should be allowed unlimitedly, should not be allowed at all, or something in-between (7-point-scale, with higher values indicating stronger support for immigration control; mean value: 3.68, SD: 2.01). It was further differentiated between immigration to Switzerland in general and immigration to the canton where the respondent lives.[7] Both experimental splits (vignettes with and without information on immigrants' willingness to adapt culturally) and all different questionnaire versions were randomly allocated to respondents participating in the survey experiment.[8]

Figure 1: Vignettes – an example

Type 1:

French persons with a **university degree**

who want to **settle down in Switzerland permanently**

who want to find a **job** for which a **Swiss applicant is available**

who **speak German** and

who are willing to **adapt to the Swiss lifestyle**.

To which extent should immigration of this group be limited:

In Switzerland in general?

No more   □   □   □   □   □   □   □   unlimited
immigration   immigration

In your own canton?

No more   □   □   □   □   □   □   □   unlimited
immigration   immigration

For the purpose of our analysis, we distinguish between respondents with or without tertiary/university education and respondents with or without a high level of national pride.[9] We analyze the concept of economic threat by studying whether support for immigration control was stronger in constellations "where economic threat is expected to be present" (Malhotra, Margalit and Mo, 2013: 392), namely when a respondent has to evaluate immigrants with similar skill levels and who are looking for a job for which Swiss candidates are available. Likewise, cultural threat is assumed to be high when a respondent with a high

level of national pride was asked to rate a migrant who does neither speak German nor French and who is eager to maintain his or her own style of living. The design also enables us to test the alternative explanation that cultural threat is high when natives are confronted with culturally similar migrants. In addition, we can assess if economic and cultural threat increases the preference for immigration control for all immigrant groups likewise or only for groups with a Western European (German, French, Norwegian or Italian) or without a Western European (Croatian or Romanian) background; or for large (Germans, French or Italians) versus small (Norwegians) or medium sized groups (Romanians, Croatians).

5. Findings: Economic and cultural threat in a group specific perspective

Respondents with Swiss nationality answered 4,489 vignettes in total. For the sake of clarity and brevity, we present plots of the coefficients from OLS models with 95%-confidence intervals (CI).[10] These reveal how certain characteristics of immigrants as indicated by the dimensions of the vignettes affect respondents' evaluation towards a greater support for immigration control (positive values) or a greater support for unlimited immigration (negative values). If the 95% CI cut the zero line the coefficients do not differ significantly from the null hypothesis of no impact.
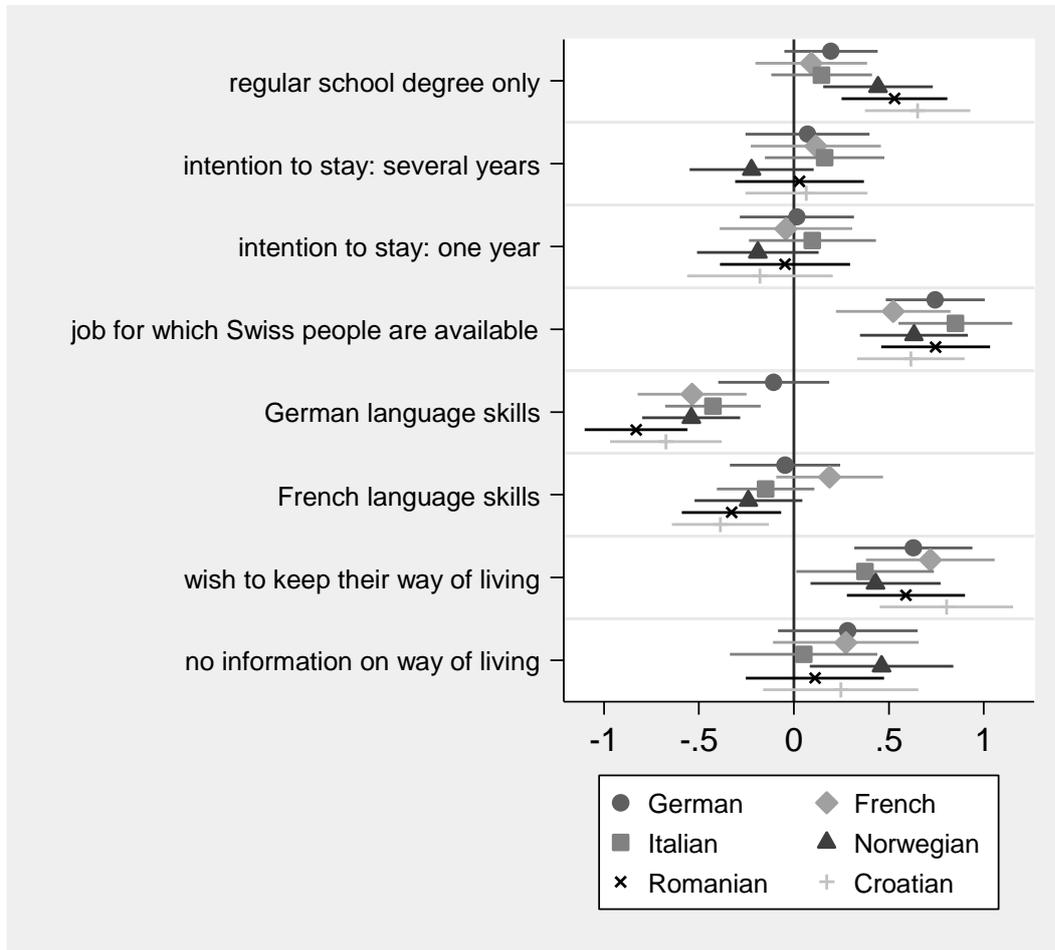
Figure 2a:

Impact of vignette dimensions on stating „should be restricted", regression coefficients and 95% CIs ($N = 4,489$; $R^2 = 0.092$)
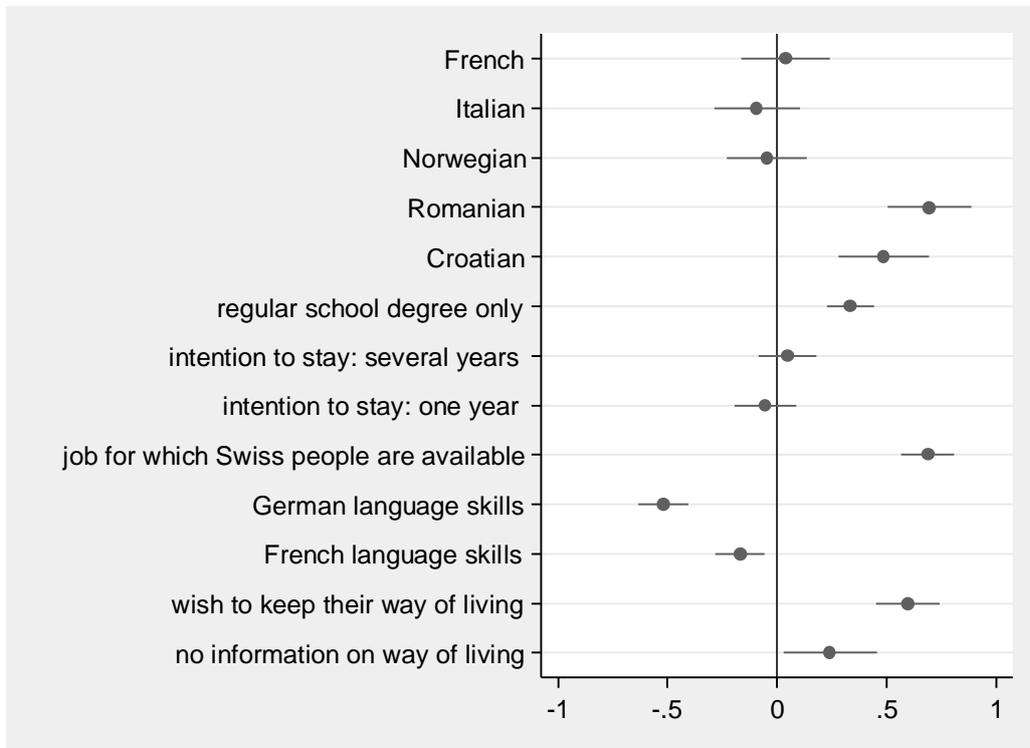
Reference groups: Germans, university degree, intended stay: permanently, job that cannot be filled with Swiss people, no German/French language skills, adapt to Swiss way of living.

Figure 2b:

Impact of vignette dimensions on stating „should be restricted" by immigrant group, regression coefficients and 95% CIs ($N = [729; 763]$; $R^2 = [0.059; 0.120]$)

Reference groups: Germans, university degree, intended stay: permanently, job that cannot be filled with Swiss people, no German/French language skills, adapt to Swiss way of living.

Results in Figure 2a show that support for stricter immigration control is higher for Romanians and Croatians than for Western Europeans. Within the group of Western Europeans, no differences can be found, i.e. the Swiss do not opt for stricter control of the immigration from Germany (reference group) as compared to immigration from Norway or France. Less-skilled migrants are less popular than highly-skilled migrants. The same applies to migrants who look for a job that native Swiss are willing to do as compared to those who search for a job that cannot be filled by natives. Respondents prefer stricter control of

migrants who want to maintain their own lifestyle than of migrants who want to adapt to Swiss culture. Interestingly, the judgement of those respondents who have not been given any information about this dimension is similar (they also show a statistically significant preference for higher immigration control, although to a lower extent – the effect size is smaller). As a default, many Swiss respondents tend to assume that migrants do not want to adapt culturally. Respondents ask for less control when evaluating migrants who speak either German or French. Migrants' planned duration of stay does not play a role. Additional analyses reveal that the labor market variable has the strongest influence (around 27% of explained variance) followed by the willingness to adapt to Swiss lifestyle (17%, see also Table A1 in appendix).

Figure 2b suggests that these patterns do not differ largely across origin groups of migrants. But it is noteworthy that the education level of migrants does not affect the attitude towards immigration of – actually overall highly-skilled and large – migrant groups from neighboring countries such as Germans, French and (though less skilled) Italians, but does so for Croatians and Romanians and also for Norwegians.

So far, the results do not solve the Swiss puzzle: Why did a majority of Swiss voters obviously favor immigration control although the large share of those migrants who actually enter the country show exactly the characteristics that *lower* support for immigration control, namely higher education and mastery of one of the Swiss languages and Western European origin? In order to answer this question we will now look at exactly those constellations of respondents' and migrants' characteristics that can be expected to increase (perceived) economic and cultural threat.
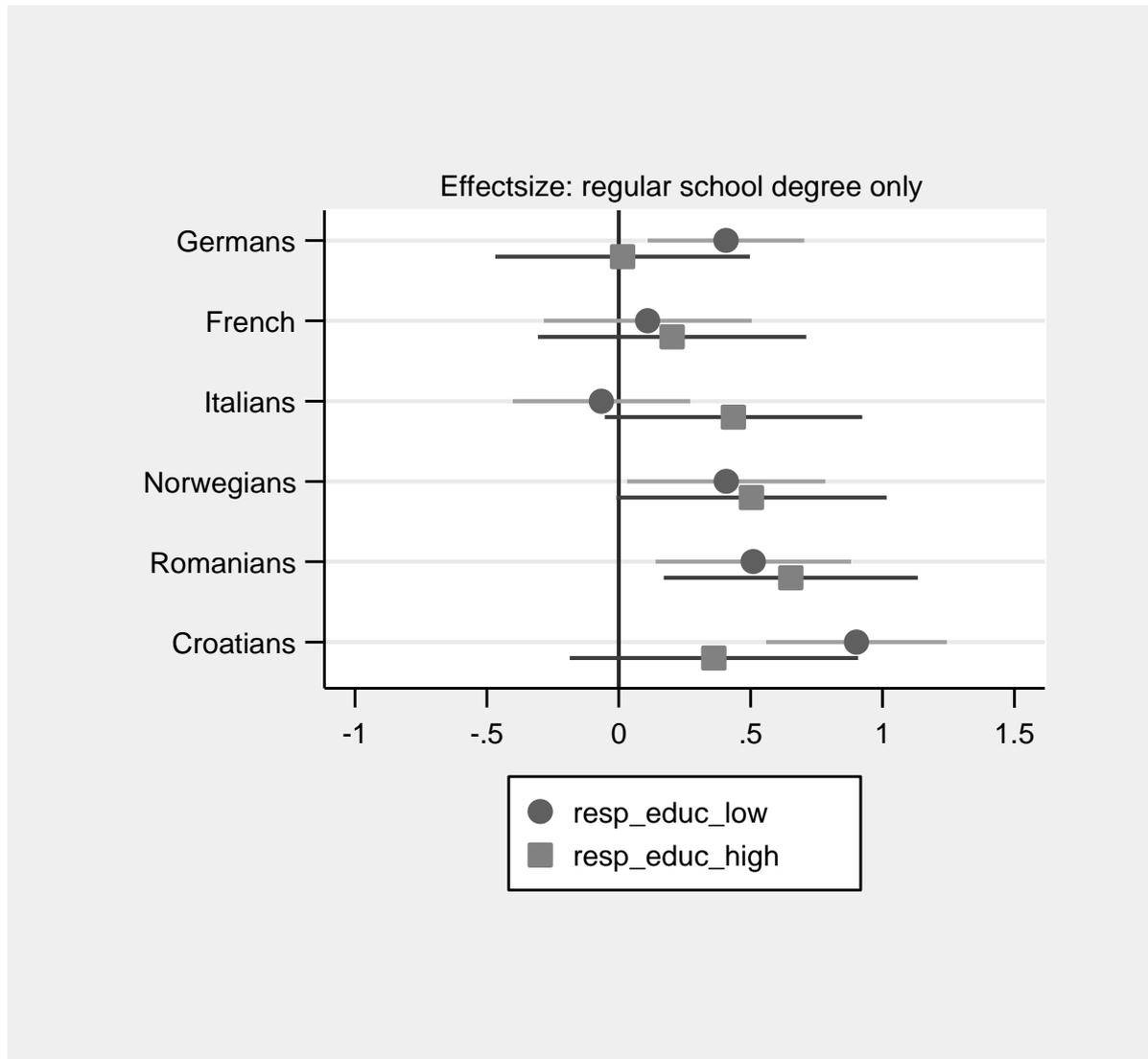
Figure 3a:

Economic threat: Impact of vignette dimension "migrants' education" and "availability of Swiss workers" on stating „should be restricted" by respondents skill level, regression coefficients and 95% CIs (N [1466; 2827]; R^2 [0.033; 0.042])
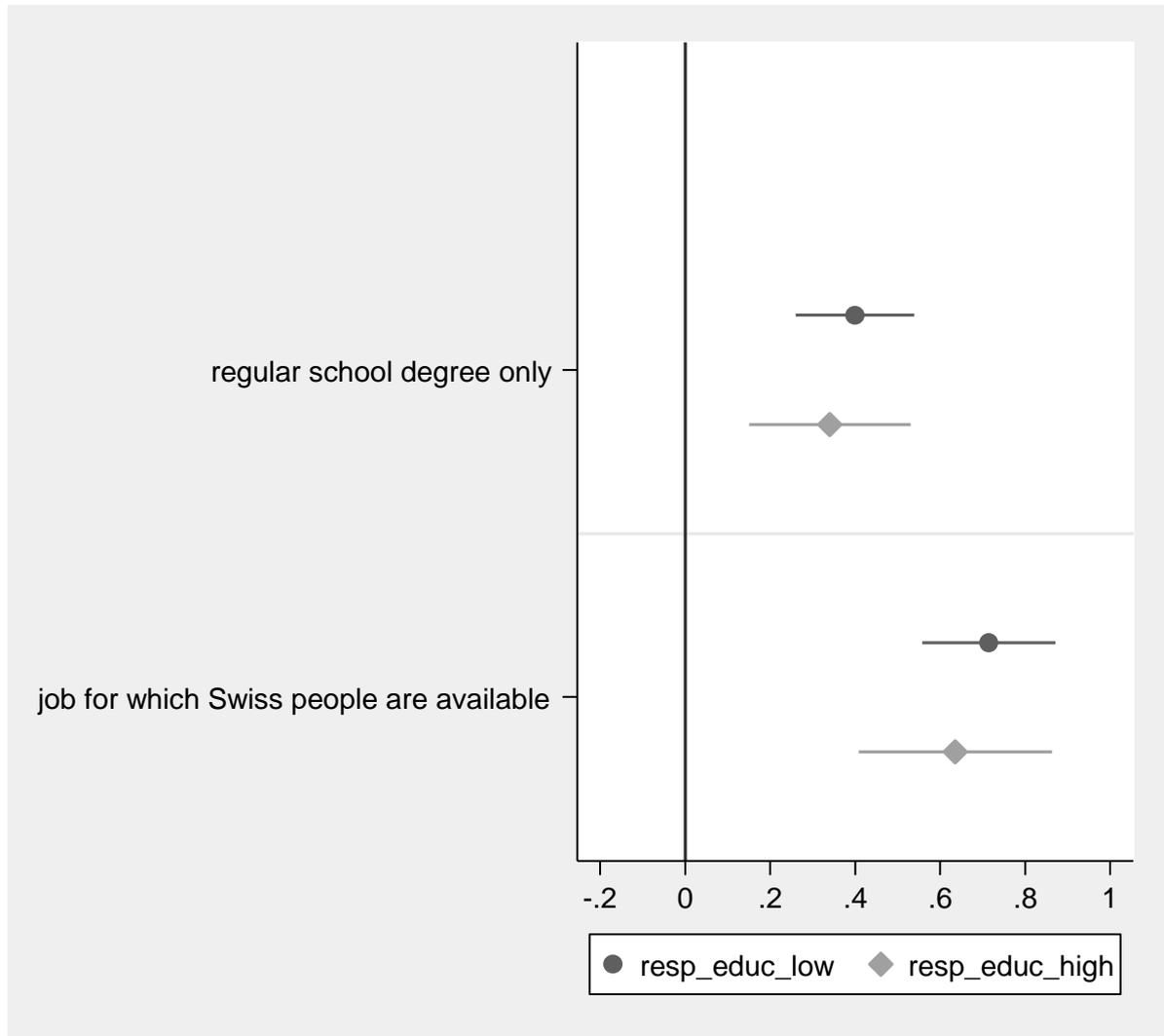
Reference groups: university degree, job that cannot be filled with Swiss people

Figure 3b:

Economic threat: Impact of vignette dimension "migrants' education" on stating „should be restricted" by immigrant group and respondents skill level, regression coefficients and 95% CIs ($N = [220; 499]$; $R^2 = [0.000; 0.0495]$)

Reference groups: university degree.

Figure 3a confirms another well-known finding from the literature (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010), i.e. that irrespective of natives' educational level, less-educated migrants are less popular than highly-educated ones. This result differs from what one could expect on the basis of a very basic economic threat model that would predict that natives favor migrants with a different skill level than their own. With respect to another vignette dimension that captures

economic threat, namely whether or not a migrant wants to do a job for which Swiss personnel is available, the pattern is similar: Independent of their own skill-level, natives favor immigration control of migrants who want to do jobs for which Swiss people are available.

We have argued above that the relationship between respondents' and migrants' characteristics may be influenced by factors on the group level, mainly migrant overall educational level, cultural background and group size. Most importantly, highly-skilled natives may be in favor of some highly-skilled migrants – knowing that they are good for the economy – but only as long as the *overall* skill level of the group under consideration is low or the highly-skilled immigrant group is small so that the newcomers do not increase economic competition among the highly-skilled.

Figure 3b reveals by tendency that natives' support for limited immigration is in general higher if migrants hold a regular school degree only for Romanians and for the small group of Norwegians. This tendency is rather independent from natives' own level of education. Interestingly, when migrants belong to groups that are seen as highly or – in the case of Italians – medium – skilled, being highly-skilled does not further reduce the quest for immigration control. This is independent of respondents' skill level, accordingly, economic competition does not seem to play an important role here. However, for German migrants – a large *and* highly-skilled group – the difference between a regular school degree and a university degree (reference) is in tendency more relevant among less-skilled natives, in comparison to highly-skilled ones. For Croatians, the pattern looks similar, but for this group, also highly-skilled natives prefer skilled immigrants at least by tendency.

Figure 4:

Economic threat: Support for immigration control of Germans and Romanians by migrants' and natives' education (mean values by groups)
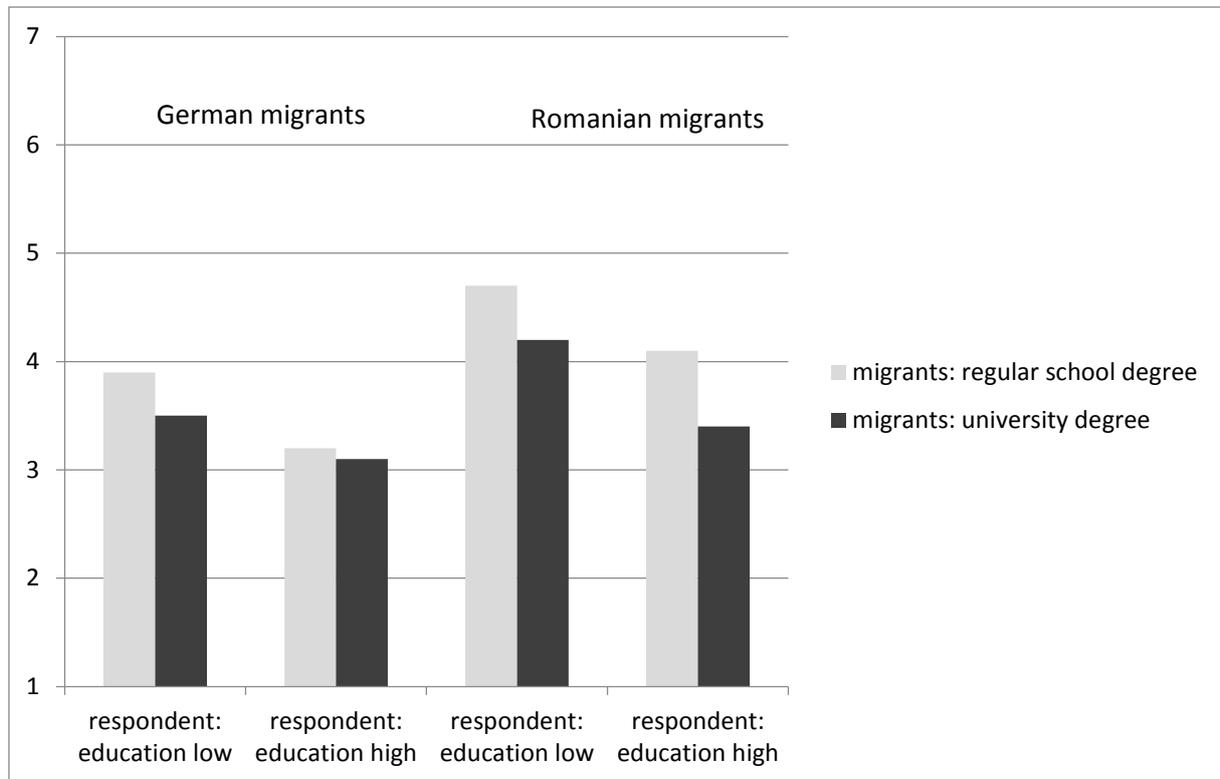

For the ease of interpretation we show in Figure 4 overall demand for immigration control that was expressed by highly- and less-skilled Swiss, differentiated by migrants' skill level and separately for Germans and Romanians. We can see once more that in a context like Switzerland, being highly-skilled helps migrants to become more popular among highly-skilled and less-skilled natives *unless* they belong to a large and overall highly-skilled group like Germans. In this case, being highly-skilled does not increase support among highly-skilled natives. One interpretation of that is that once a large groups' overall skill level is high, perceived competition increases even among highly-skilled natives who usually have little reason to worry about a migration-related increase in economic competition. One has to note, however, that absolute levels of demand for immigration control are lower for German migrants than for those from Romania for both highly-educated and less-educated Swiss

natives (see again Figure 4). But the greater popularity of Germans as compared to Romanians is rather small (0.3 scale points) when it comes to highly educated natives evaluating highly educated migrants. In every other combination of natives' and migrants' skill level, demand for immigration control is about 0.7 to 0.9 scale points lower for Germans than for Romanians.

Figure 5a:

Cultural threat: Impact of vignette dimension "wishes to keep their way of living" on stating „should be restricted" by immigrant group and respondents level of national pride, regression coefficients and 95% CIs ($N = [2016; 2261]$; $R^2 = [0.008; 0.024]$)
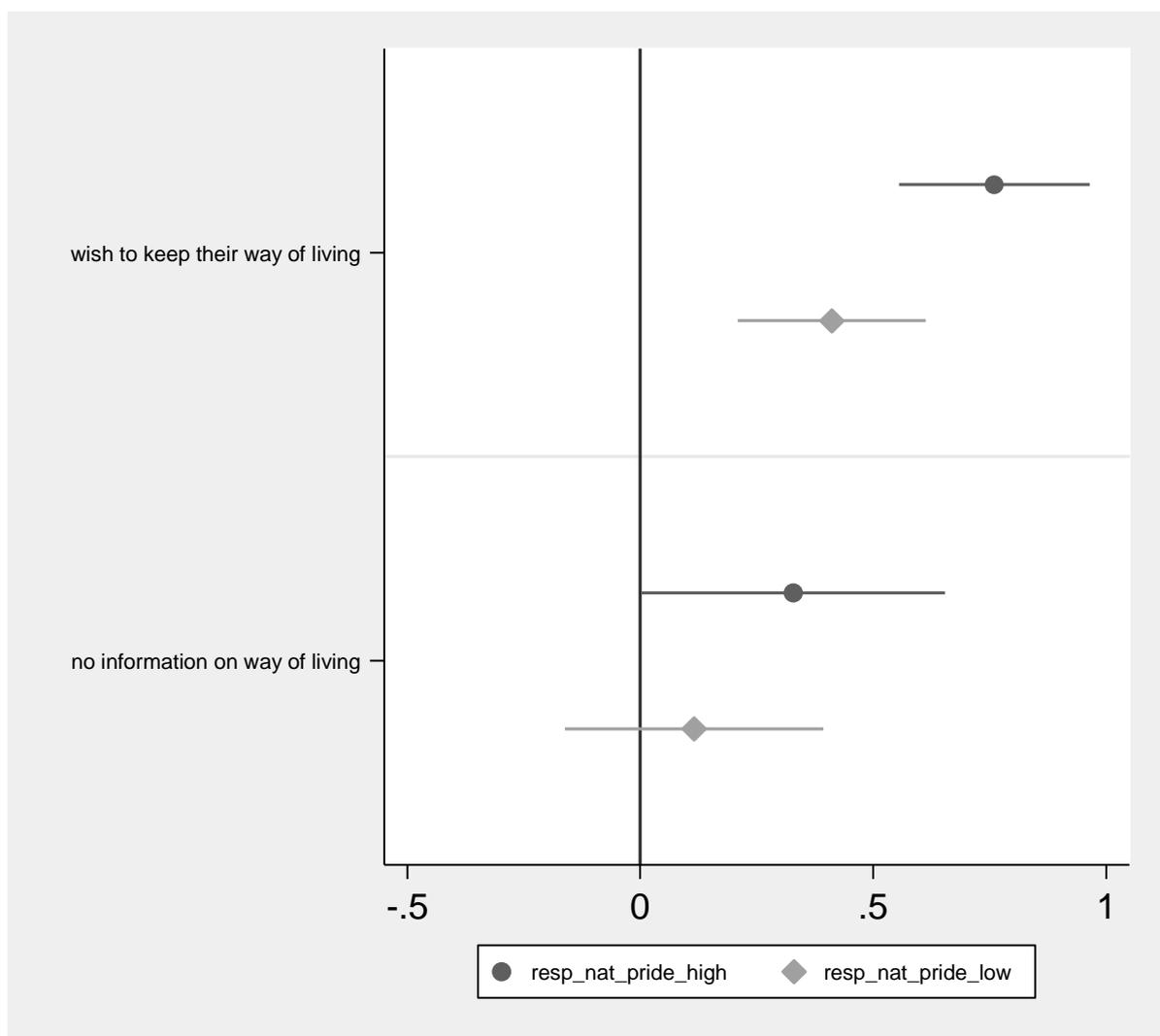
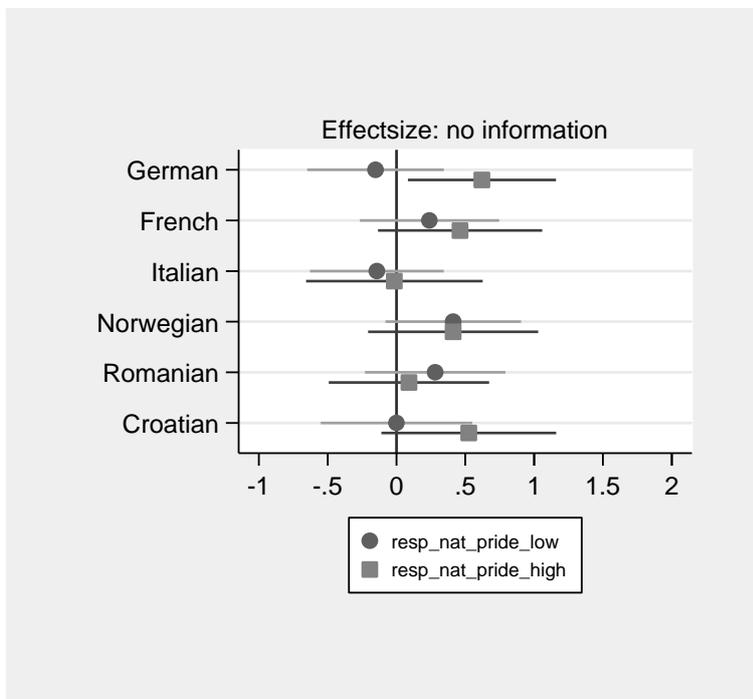**Reference group**: Migrants willing to adapt to the Swiss lifestyle.
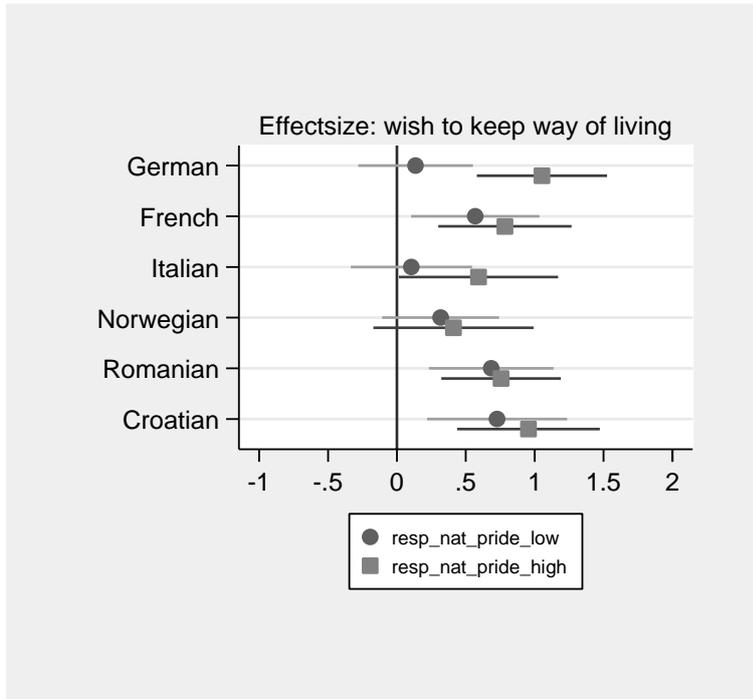
Figure 5b:

Cultural threat: Impact of vignette dimension "wishes to keep their way of living" on stating „should be restricted" by immigrant group and respondents level of national pride, regression coefficients and 95% CIs (*N* [217; 260]; *R²* [0.000; 0.072])


Reference groups: Migrants willing to adapt to the Swiss lifestyle.

With respect to cultural threat Figure 5a reveals that both natives with high and those with low levels of national pride prefer migrants who are willing to adapt to the Swiss lifestyle. However, when no information on this issue is provided, natives with high levels of national pride tend to assume that migrants will not adapt to the Swiss lifestyle whereas this is less so the case for natives with low levels of national pride. Again, the most interesting results become visible by looking separately at the different immigrant groups (Figure 5b): For most groups, the wish to keep their way of living does either leave the request for immigration control mostly unaffected (Norwegians, Italians) or increases it (French, Romanians, Croatians). Furthermore, for these nationality groups, respondents' level of national pride does not affect the role they attribute to migrants' cultural adaptation. There is, again, one interesting exception to this pattern: Only Swiss respondents with high levels of national pride ask for immigration restrictions of Germans who want to keep their way of living. For this subgroup of Swiss respondents, Germans who are not willing to adapt culturally are substantively less popular than Germans who plan to adapt culturally. In other words, Germans are the only group that is "disliked" by pride Swiss natives *only* when they are unwilling to adapt culturally. For Germans, this pattern looks similar when no information on their willingness to adapt is given. This suggests that many Swiss with high levels of national pride assume that Germans do want to keep their way of living. Note that this is not the case for the other groups under consideration here.

Figure 6:

Cultural threat: Support for immigration control of Germans and Romanians by migrants' willingness to adapt to the Swiss lifestyle and respondents' level of national pride (mean values by groups)
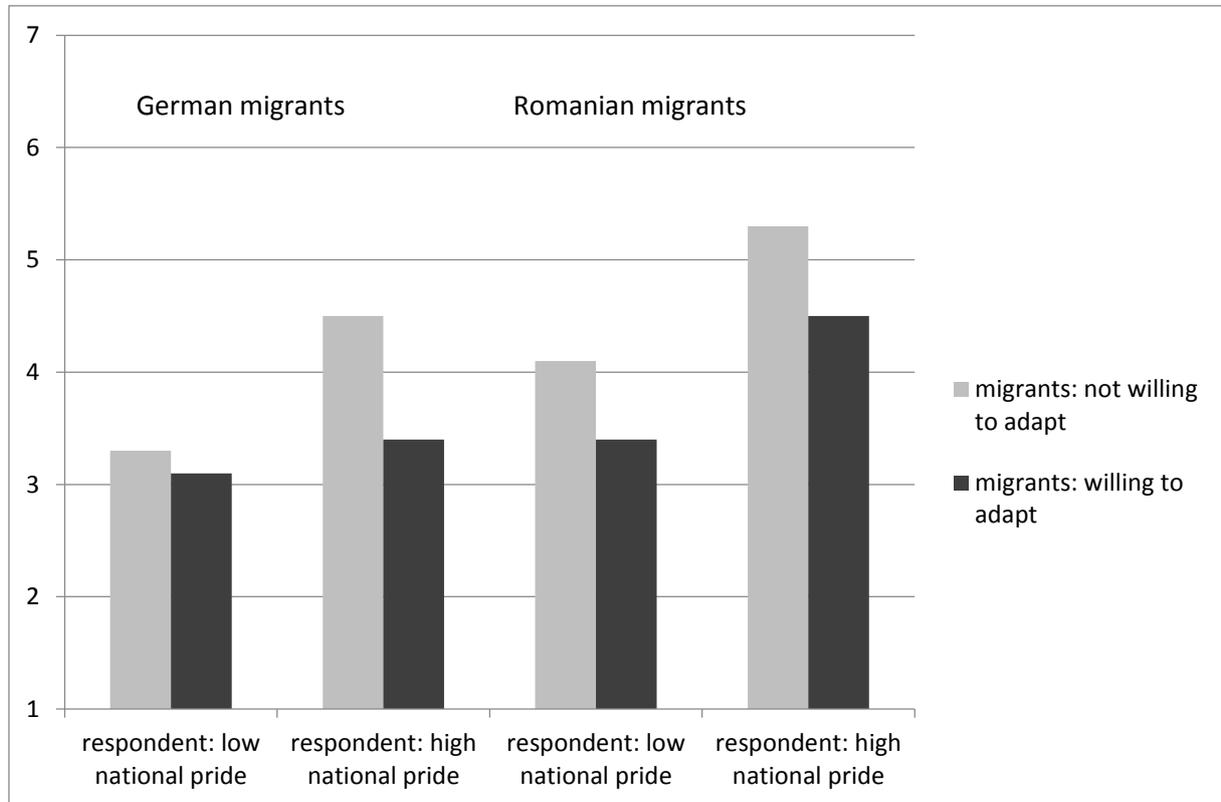
In Figure 6 we show again mean values for demand for immigration control for Germans and Romanians. The graph reveals that for Swiss with high levels of national pride, the demand to curb immigration of Germans who are unwilling to adapt culturally is as high as for Romanians who are willing to adapt culturally. Remember that once Germans are willing to adapt their lifestyle, Swiss respondents with high levels of pride do not differ from those with low levels of pride in their demand for control of immigration from Germany.

6. Discussion

In this article, we used a survey experiment with vignettes in order to look into the role of economic and cultural threat in explaining support for immigration control. We conducted this

survey in the Swiss context where support for immigration control is substantial even though the majority of immigrants belongs to the much sought-after group of highly-skilled Europeans.

Theoretically, we based our study on approaches that explain immigration sceptical attitudes as a result of perceived economic and cultural threat. Starting out from the criticism that many studies fail to find support for the role of threat because it is not modelled properly (see Malhotra, Margalit and Mo, 2013), we tried to study the *interaction* between migrants' and natives' individual characteristics. Doing so we assumed that perceived economic threat is high when migrants and natives have similar levels of education and that perceived cultural threat is high when natives with high levels of national pride are confronted with migrants who want to maintain their own lifestyle. Unlike most previous studies we also analyzed whether this relationship between respondents' and migrants' characteristics varies across groups that differ with respect to their aggregate educational level, cultural background and size.

We could do so by using vignettes that enabled us to study the role of these characteristics independently from each other and in various theoretically relevant combinations. This is a considerable advantage because attempts to measure the role of (perceived) economic and cultural threat by using survey questions face the problem that the attitudes captured are often triggered by attitudes on certain large immigrant groups, e.g. less-educated immigrants with a Muslim background. Most existing attempts to study the role of economic and cultural threat independently from each other face the problem that they do not take migrants' origin into account systematically and thus ignore the possibility that, for example, a university degree may be more important for migrants belonging to an overall less skilled group or cultural adaptation may be more important for large rather than small immigrant groups.

By using vignettes we could provide new insight into the role of threat in explaining immigration-sceptical attitudes and confirm several findings from the few previous studies. Most importantly, we could show that both economic and cultural threat play a role in explaining support for immigration control but that feelings of threat seem to become only salient in specific constellations of natives' and migrants' characteristics and only in specific (origin) group settings.

With respect to economic threat, our empirical results indicate that highly-skilled Swiss natives show considerably lower levels of support for immigration control than the rest of the population and that both low- and highly-skilled natives have a preference for highly-skilled migrants. However, a group-by-group comparison revealed that the overall greater support for limited immigration of less-skilled as compared to highly-skilled migrants vanishes once highly-skilled Swiss respondents have to evaluate immigration of large and highly-skilled immigrant groups. This pattern was most pronounced for Germans, by far the largest immigrant group in Switzerland. Obviously, economic threat is an issue for highly-skilled natives as well if they are confronted with large groups of migrants who have similar skill levels than their own.

With respect to cultural threat, our results point in a similar direction. It is again only in specific constellations that – overall rather popular – migrants like Germans raise requests for immigration control, namely when nationally pride Swiss respondents evaluate German migrants who do not want to adapt culturally. Swiss respondents with high levels of national pride are only willing to accept further unlimited immigration of Germans if these are willing to accept Swiss lifestyle. At the same time, a majority assumes that this is not the case. For other – less present – immigrant groups there is no clear pattern: migrants' willingness to adapt culturally decreases support for immigration control for some groups and leaves it unaffected for others, independent from natives' level of national pride. For the subgroup of natives with high levels of national pride, being Swiss is a salient part of their social identity

(Tajfel, 1981: 255). Our results suggest that this identity may be perceived as threatened not only by migrants from seemingly different cultural background but also by the presence of large numbers of foreigners who are not willing to adapt to the Swiss lifestyle while not being dissimilar enough to stay truly apart from Swiss culture. Seemingly small cultural differences can evoke the desire to demarcate and protect the ingroup against a (large) outgroup (Helbing, 2011). All in all, our results suggest that economic and cultural threat both provide important explanations for immigration control in Switzerland although there is more research needed to focus on the variation not caused by these threats.

Our analysis has its limitations as well. Using an online-access panel, highly-educated respondents were oversampled, and there might have been some self-selection of respondents given the topic of the survey. Using a more representative survey probably would have changed the descriptive results. We expect, however, that our substantive analyses on the causal impact of vignette dimensions and their interplay with respondent variables would not change, since this would only be the case if meaningful moderator variables were omitted (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015).

Our results show that it is worthwhile replicating similar experiments with further respondent samples and different groups of immigrants in different country contexts. This would allow to study the interaction between natives' and migrants' characteristics across groups and contexts that vary with respect to migrants' overall skill level, cultural background and group size. It would reveal whether or not the pattern we have found for German migrants in Switzerland in particular is typical for large and overall highly-skilled and culturally allegedly "similar" origin groups. After all, many countries try to attract increasing numbers of skilled migrants and many experience substantial immigration from their neighboring countries. Given the increasing heterogeneity of migration inflows, survey data that aim at capturing attitudes towards immigrants without differentiating between origin groups seem no longer up-to-date.

From a practical perspective, our results suggest that while the international competition for highly-skilled migrants seems to find broad support by the general public, highly-skilled natives' support for unrestricted immigration of highly-skilled migrants may not be unlimited once large inflows of highly-skilled migrants have become reality. Whether or not this is the true reason behind the lack of a coherent immigration policy aiming at attracting highly-skilled migrants (see Facchini and Mayda, 2012) remains an open question. Likewise, results show that migration-related cultural threat is not necessarily restricted to allegedly culturally distant migrants. In this respect, the Swiss experience seems to suggest above all that the only truly popular migrants are those that aren't around in large numbers.

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Appendix

Table A1: OLS regressions of support for immigration control (7-point response scale) on with vignette variables and respondents' education and national pride

VARIABLES	(1) only vignette variables	(2) plus resp: educ high	(3) plus resp: national pride high
French	0.0391	0.0546	0.00106
	(0.104)	(0.106)	(0.102)
Italian	-0.0908	-0.0678	-0.0822
	(0.100)	(0.102)	(0.0995)
Norwegian	-0.0454	-0.0527	-0.0639
	(0.0931)	(0.0948)	(0.0924)
Romanian	0.696***	0.732***	0.739***
	(0.0980)	(0.0999)	(0.0964)
Croatian	0.487***	0.461***	0.502***
	(0.105)	(0.107)	(0.104)
regular school degree only	0.335***	0.364***	0.299***
	(0.0556)	(0.0556)	(0.0556)
intention to stay: several years	0.0480	0.0562	0.0891
	(0.0677)	(0.0689)	(0.0675)
intention to stay: one year	-0.0534	-0.0619	-0.0389
	(0.0723)	(0.0733)	(0.0712)
job for which Swiss people are avaible	0.688***	0.700***	0.682***
	(0.0620)	(0.0638)	(0.0616)
German language skills	-0.519***	-0.528***	-0.518***
	(0.0577)	(0.0585)	(0.0570)
French language skills	-0.168***	-0.170***	-0.178***
	(0.0574)	(0.0583)	(0.0567)
want to keep their way of living	0.597***	0.615***	0.583***
	(0.0736)	(0.0750)	(0.0716)
no information on the way of living	0.244**	0.256**	0.223**
	(0.109)	(0.108)	(0.107)
resp: education high		-0.598***	
		(0.103)	
resp: national pride high			0.949***
			(0.0949)
Constant	3.045***	3.208***	2.632***
	(0.115)	(0.120)	(0.122)
Observations	4,489	4,293	4,277
R-squared	0.092	0.115	0.149

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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[1] There are moderate negative correlations of proportion foreigners and support of the referendum on aggregated levels ($r = - 0.53$ for cantons and $r = - 0.26$ for communities; own calculations based on data from *Bundesamt für Statistik*).

[2] Economic threat may also arise if natives feel that immigration increases fiscal pressure (see Helbling and Kriesi 2014). We neglect this issue since we focus on skilled migrants.

[3] Despite its focus on hostility towards immigrants rather than immigration we include this study because of its particular relevance in terms of design and setting

[4] We use the terms highly-skilled migrants and highly-educated migrants interchangeably and contrast these groups with less-skilled migrants and less-educated migrants. The former group refers to individuals with some sort of tertiary education.

[5] We thank intervista for the opportunity to use their panel and for their accurate and professional support in implementing our ideas.

[6] For example, the campaign of the SVP in Ticino came up with posters featuring three rats, one of them from Romania, nibbling at Swiss cheese (http://www.treffpunkteuropa.de/balairatt-ch-Rumanen-und-Italiener-sind-Schmarotzer-der-Schweiz). Information on skill levels retrieved from the *Bundesamt für Statistik* (available upon request).

[7] We report the estimations for the national level only since results for the canton level do not differ substantially.

[8] The ordering of the four vignettes scenarios was randomized for each respondent, random assignment was confirmed by thorough checks.

[9] National pride was measured by a standard item question: "How proud are you of being Swiss?" (high pride: "very proud"=47.1%). Respondent with high educational level (tertiarly/university)=34.2%.

[10] All regressions were estimated with robust standard errors to adjust for the nested data structure (several vignette evaluations per respondent).